

#grappling



**We're all grappling now...
with *Life*, the Universe and everything!**

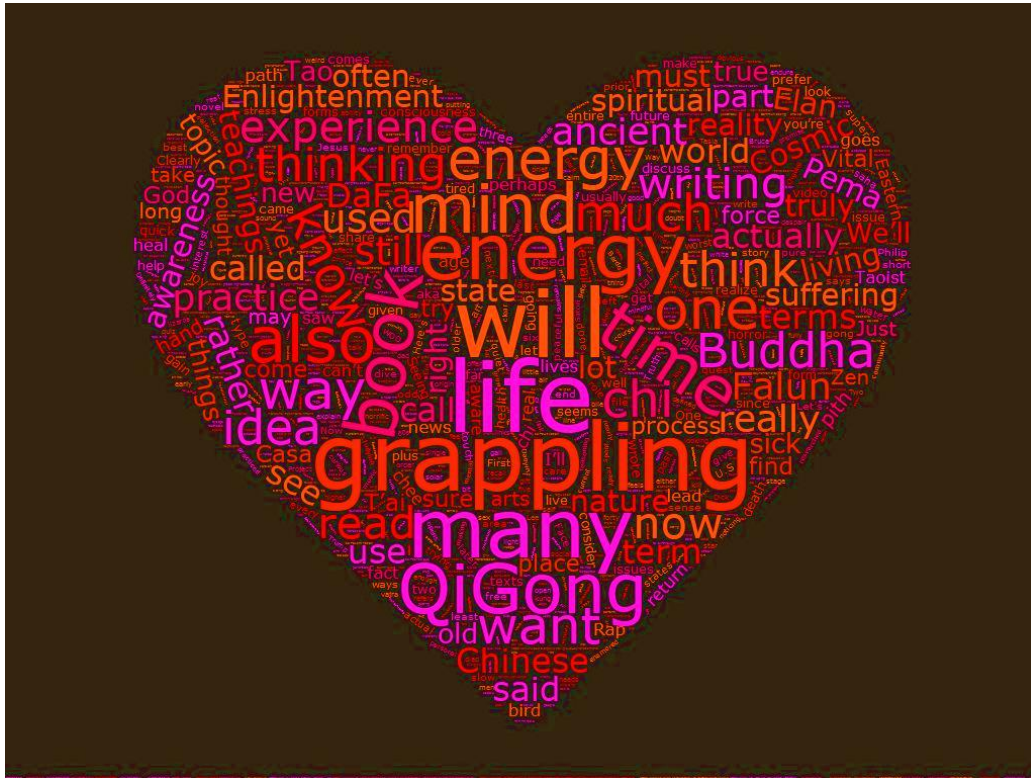
FFE / Zoom Party Edition

[\(Music while you read\)](#)

#grappling

with reality, realizations

and EVERYTHING



The “B4 Times” word cloud cover

#grappling - an eBook for YOU

from e jamelle “jami” Morgan

aka zenwoman.ID on Twitter



For future seekers
of the treasures...
Integrity, Equality
& Vitality

And my friends, especially JC, MG, ET, Barb,
Scottie, Nick, Tony, my BFF KK and bro Jeff.
May we ALL See Clearly and find Liberation.

Hope our Blue Frog hopped off
the wheel (of samsara)
and so can all of us
who have had enough
“wheel alignments.”

Why another book?

“If you write your book
there’s a chance someone will read it...
if you don’t,
you are guaranteed no one will.”
-- Sage advice from writer friend
D. Scott Apel

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ZiaLink Ink Publishing

ISBN: 978-0-9827619-7-7

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"the present is theirs but the future, for which I have truly worked, is mine."
-- Nikola Tesla

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Footnotes, About the Author & a couple of great reviews of Seeing Clearly. The End.

intro



We usually don't make major life changes until we become REALLY uncomfortable or some drastic event forces change.

Before the #COVID-19 crisis I wrote: We might be riding high financially or socially, or at least comfortable, but when the bottom drops out we need answers. Sudden unexpected death or loss often causes major introspection for those left behind.

I rewrote a lot of this book given our truly tumultuous time in 2020, a time of major upheaval and change for EVERYONE! One could say an unprecedented time of change, but that phrase has been so overused and abused it's practically meaningless. The "novel virus" though has proven truly novel— unique and unpredictable. It has up-ended many lives and livelihoods.

Before this pandemic who could have imagined our world with empty streets, empty stores, empty sports arenas and convention centers or cathedrals converted to hospitals. I had been grappling with how to convey the benefits of healthier habits, coping with change and contemplation as practice. Then millions of people were forced into immediate change and contemplation of their own unexpected predicaments. In other words, thanks to Covid we're all grappling now, baby— especially with change.

So, much of my work was done in early 2020, but then I realized we still need coping "tools."

Rather than rush this eBook for early fall release when it needed a lot of revision (RE-VISION), I took to twitter with the hashtag grappling; thus the title *#grappling*. Grappling with political angst often (okay usually) overtook my goal of sharing the tips and tools I had been writing about. Sadly, I was becoming the Angry Buddhist or Non ZenWoman, not good for my "brand" but more to grapple with. In fact, how we perceive ourselves and others is a major topic here.

Now that you've had plenty of time to grapple with "the state of our union", if not politically then pandemically (love the term pandemia, as our friends to the south call it), you may be tired of grappling and ready for fun. We'll get into that too in Mundane Matters.

Will America return to "normal" or what I call pre-Covid daze? We never really return to our past because like it or not change is all there is, not to mention the old saw about putting the toothpaste back in the tube. You are no longer the person you were before this year and hopefully you'll evolve (not devolve) in the coming year. Change is our only guarantee.

Many people blamed 2020, even using it as a new curse word: "so 2020" they say. Maybe the astrologers were right—some predicted 2020 would "rock our world" shaking our personal, political and societal views. It has.

I had hopes of a wonderful year, one of finally seeing clearly (title of my last book) in 2020. Instead of "perfect vision" I suffered a concussion during the summer and couldn't see at all. My left eye was injured, but it's fine now. Who knows about my brain. 😊 Even more reason for grappling. After all, we decide what is a blessing or a curse. (Yep, there's a section on that.)

Discovering how to get *Comfortable with Uncertainty* (title of a book by one of my favorite teacher/writers Pema Chodron¹) is essential in times like these. Pema's teachings (on Youtube and her books, I'll share links soon) offer valuable insights from a lifetime of grappling. Her ideas on grappling and embracing the shifting sand that is samsara, our cyclical physical life (cycles of birth, decay and death) certainly rocked my worldview. We'll grapple with Buddhist and Chinese terms and their meaning in the first section.

If any topics, titles, names or ideas mentioned in this intro or the content list are unfamiliar or troubling (eastern philosophy has it's own unique terms and vocabulary) they'll be clarified as we go through anecdotes and/or footnotes within this eBook. There will also be links to resources, videos and other mixed media for those who want more info. That's one reason I prefer an interactive eBook. (I'll elaborate on my other ecological reasons about reducing paper waste in the climate section under Mundane Matters.)

As for "spiritual" talk, hopefully we can grapple with beneficial practices, movements, and energy medicine in a practical and historical way. I'll share how I discovered the term "Riddles of Qi" (Qi="chee"= life force) and why I love it.

If it still sounds like gibberish for you, let me blurt out a few concepts that may entice you to stick around, especial during our plague-induced retreat(s):

Low impact exercise. Placing more emphasis on posture and movement, especially Qigong (chee-gong) and T'ai Chi (tie-chee) movements, but in general gentle movements as opposed to foot-pounding, knee crushing, head-bashing sports and exercise, are highly beneficial.

Energy practices. Everything is energy. Ever-increasing magnification of the infinitesimal realm reveals vibration, not solid matter, at essence. Since we are energy we send and receive energy constantly and respond to intention at far more subtle levels. That's why acupuncture, or even acupressure, t'ai chi, various yogas, and my fave Qigong work. We are energy.

The three treasures. A key concept in many ancient philosophies is the power of three. Solid as a three-legged stool, some say. In the region of China that will always be Tibet at heart, regardless of state-imposed boundaries, these ideas and practices have flourished for centuries if not millennia. Our power comes from the three treasures²: integrity, equality and vitality.

So, there you have it, a taste of the type of topics and experiences we'll grapple with here.

To quote Pema, as she often ends her talks and dedications, "May it be of benefit."

¹ **Pema Chödrön** (born Deirdre Blomfield-Brown, July 14, 1936, in New York City, but raised on a farm in New Jersey) is an author and American Tibetan Buddhist. When her marriage fell apart she became so intrigued by the teachings of Tibetan Buddhist monk [Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche](#) (link leads to videos, talks and information about him and the Tibetan Buddhist practices) that she dedicated her life to the Dharma (Buddhist philosophy) becoming the first fully ordained Tibetan Buddhist nun from America. Pema also served as the Abbess of [Gampo Abbey](#) monastery in Nova Scotia, Canada (for at least 30 years.) Now in her 80s she is mostly in retreat.

² In Chinese Falun DaFa practice, inspired by ancient Taoist teachings, the power of movement is everything. Energy comes from Zhen/Shan/Ren qualities I interpret as Integrity, equality, and vitality. These are universal qualities, not human attitudes. Honesty and Compassion are human values. Integrity and equality apply to everything, even molecules. There will be much more about these "treasures" throughout the book.



NOTE TO READER: The various topics are written for either sequential or non-linear consumption.

Even so, I hope you skim through the topics before reading the end of this section. It will be more meaningful and beneficial. And remember, we're grappling with complicated issues, not solving them.

INTERNAL links (within the eBook) are noted and often helpful. For instance, if you're reading a later section but didn't read preceding material, the link can take you to a previous topic.

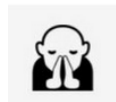
EXTERNAL links to videos or articles are supplemental and non-essential—unless I say otherwise 😊

External links will not work well, if at all, on a Kindle reader, but are great if you're on a Kindle Fire tablet or any tablet, laptop or PC.

All Kindle devices (and maybe the app) allow touching or highlighting any word for instant definition. Throughout the book there are many footnotes for first mention of unusual subjects (things and people.) You can search the PDF or eBook. None of this is possible with old school print books, PLUS we're saving trees. I have more to say on that in [Climate Concerns](#) (example of internal link.)

Finally, for my peeps reading this early FFE "Friends & Family Edition" PDF (or "short cut" doc) please contact me if you're having trouble viewing. You have excerpts, or at most Section One. That means a lot of links, even the one above won't work, until you have the full book. It's truly a "sneak peek."

Thank you for #grappling with me,



Jamelle "jami" Morgan
Albuquerque, NM
Star Date: 12.21.2020

Riddles of Qi

Qi, often spelled chi and pronounced “chee”, as it sounds to Westerners, is a Chinese term for life force.

Chi is the most essential aspect of Chinese medicine, which focuses on well-being and elimination of disease. These methods take time and do not involve the intense often invasive methods Americans are accustomed to. Our bodies are capable of self-healing and repair, but that requires a different way of viewing medicine. That’s a topic we’ll grapple with in this section.

We are energy— a mass of vibrating molecules.

There is nothing truly solid in our bodies or this physical world. As quantum physics (and advanced microscopic analysis) has proven all matter is vibrating molecules. This means vibrations are far more important than we previously thought. For instance, this *Scientific American* blog post from 2018 is titled [“The Hippie’s were Right: It’s all about Vibrations, Man”](#) and also considers what’s come to be called the “hard problem” of consciousness.

Asian teachings and practices have never considered consciousness a hard problem at all. Consciousness has always been the basis and core of their approach to living and healing.

Vibration is the result of energy. Photons are the smallest known unit of light and can be perceived as waves or particles, or as someone we’ll meet later said many years ago “wave-icles.” So ancient Chinese medicine and Indian yoga have always been “right on.”

What creates energy is up for grabs. You may say God and I may think of a GodForce (as we’ll contemplate in the Cosmic section) or you may have your own unique idea.

What I know for sure is that we are truly *manifesting our lives moment by moment*.

One of my friends once said we are the excrement of everything we’ve thought and done. Grapple with that.

Defining terms...

First and foremost, let’s define grappling: Grappling is the process of persevering, thinking critically, analyzing data, and constructing an in-depth understanding when faced with a problem that does not have a clear path to a solution. Many of these topics will not have clear-cut answers, just as there are no absolute “cures” for Covid, viruses and other “dis-ease.”

It’s a shift in perspective to realize throughout life we grapple with issues that are not black and white, right or wrong. In fact, few things, other than math are absolute, and maybe it’s not as definitive as we once thought. Scientific principles change and evolve based on new discoveries.

For instance, the practices we’re about to ponder can actually change the genetic makeup of our cells. In 2016 researchers revealed that the length of the telomeres (protective “nibs” at the ends of our chromosomes) indicate the length of the cell’s life, which affect the length of our lives.

Success and purpose, what matters most; perhaps your definitions of those ideas have changed since the Covid crisis. If you haven't grappled with those concepts yet, we will.

There are a lot of Buddhist, Chinese and Eastern philosophical terms in this book. It's not to be trendy or erudite, it's what comes naturally to me after more than forty years of dharma study. See, there's one: dharma, the Teachings or "Truth." Christians would call the Bible their dharma, but the real Dharma cannot be written or cast in stone.

That is the essential message of the ancient Chinese book called the **Tao te Ching**: that which can be named is not the true Tao. I'm not providing a footnote on this book or the meaning of Tao (pronounced dow) now because we're about to take a deep dive into the Tao and all the various energy practices that have evolved from those teachings.

Buddha is said to have given over 84,000 variations of the dharma in his lifetime as Shakyamuni in India (there were earlier buddhas, too.) Why so many? (teachings and buddhas?) Shakyamuni Buddha was adapting his teachings to his audience. The 84K can be taken literally or metaphorically (same with Jesus and his parables which came about 500 years later.) Was Jesus influenced by both the Tao and Buddha? Some say yes. I wrote about that in *Seeing Clearly* and fictionalized ideas in my novel *A Kindred Spirit* (aka AKS.)

The Tao is intentionally vague, some say "fact free" or a state of mental freedom. That is basically the opposite of Christianity with a personal, human-like God and commandments. Eastern philosophy refers to both subjective relativism and Ultimate Unity in which everything is merged and transcends artificial distinctions. Wu Wei! ("Woo Way") a Taoist term for effortless surrender to the natural cycles of the world. Too much, too soon? I'll slow down.

In this section will look at a few specific types of energy practice including some that aren't what they seem (let that be a tease.)

I must confess, I'm not into martial arts, combat or turning these practices into "self-defense." Personally, I see most of that as a perversion of these beneficial movements (T'ai Chi, Qigong and others we'll explore.) I had no idea my #grappling tag was already in use with MMA (mixed martial arts) when I started using it for my book. BUT, it's working out in a fun way since there hasn't been much physical grappling going on during Covid daze.

There has been far more mental grappling than I could have imagined! Sometimes I hear the word 2 – 3 times a day. I also laughed about an insurance commercial (airing in 2020) that mentioned **Muay Thai** and **Kumite**, which literally means "grappling hands" (組手) in Japanese. Maybe some of those grapplers who found my tag will benefit too.

Hopefully we can grapple with ancient teachings and current practices in a neutral, non-threatening perhaps fun way. You don't have to consider them spiritual. We'll look at energy, consciousness, vitality—the Elan Vital; what inspires, motivates us, and creates health. This section is truly all about the Chi, for you, me, we. I'm still grappling with non-binary pronouns. Those are probably still here. 😊

The phrase "Riddles of Qi" came from a translation of *The Zhuangzi*, sometimes called "Master Zhuang's Way", one of the root texts that forms the philosophy called the Tao. Zhuang's theories form the "inner chapters" of the Tao te Ching, while the more familiar poem-like verses are considered the public text.

Many centuries ago a couple of “old guys” were sharing their stories and ideas about life. *Zhuangzi*, also called Chuang-tzu (a result of Wade-Giles³ romanization translations) is named for “Master Zhuang” who along with the unidentified “old man” Lao-tzu (or Laozi), are the earliest texts of the philosophy that has come to be known as the Tao (*Daojia*) aka School of the Way.

Translations of Chinese characters has resulted in confusion, plus you could say Taoism is a “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma” (a phrase attributed to Winston Churchill but made popular in conspiracies about JFK⁴’s assassination.) Zhuangzi is a MUCH older, deeper mystery.

What is Qi? Chee is the key! Energy is everything and everything IS energy.

Energy practices will be a theme throughout most of this section, but let’s start with YOU!

Through synchronicity, cosmic connection or YuanFen, an ancient Chinese term/symbol for destiny, you are here and that’s auspicious.



synchronicity

If you've found your way here, it's likely something resonates with you. It could be more than that... Asian philosophies claim we are led to our predestined path of awakening. Tibetans say finding certain teachings is auspicious. This YuanFen symbol relates to such destiny.

Famous Swiss psychologist Carl Jung⁵ coined the term synchronicity for meaningful coincidences and encounters. Here’s Deepak Chopra⁶ in [a video explaining synchronicity](#). (Lucky I found it 😊)



You’ve probably had the experience of thinking of someone and then they call or TXT you. Or you find just the right book, resource, link, music, or “coincidence” that resolves a problem or inspires you.

Synchronicity is not a new or “new age” idea. Ancient Chinese symbols carved into stone or painted on bones, pots and rice paper, prove humans valued and preserved such ideas, in fact struggled to do so, much like I feel after many edits and versions of this e-papyrus. Just making sure you’re reading.

³ Wade-Giles (root of our woes) two guys from far more recent times (mid-19th century), Thomas Wade and Herbert Giles, developed a system of translating Chinese symbols, based on the Beijing dialect, considered more familiar in the English-speaking world. That resulted in terms like Chang and Dow instead of Zhang and Tao, as example. More recently it’s considered controversial “romanization” of Asian language. Their Chinese-English dictionary was published in 1892.

⁴ John F Kennedy 35th President of the United States

⁵ Carl Gustav Jung was a Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who founded analytical psychology. Jung’s work was influential in the fields of psychiatry, anthropology, archaeology, literature, philosophy, and religious studies. He founded “depth” psychology as well as archetypes and dream analysis.

⁶ Deepak Chopra, an Indian-American alternative medicine advocate, has written over 100 books, many explaining the hows and whys of our dis-ease and healing process. He remains a formally licensed physician.

Philip K. Dick, a prolific, controversial 20th Century speculative fiction writer and prominent figure in my novel *A Kindred Spirit*, was obsessed with the many synchronicities that he felt were revealing Truth and the future. Many of his far-out ideas have already come to pass, including the Kindle or tablet you may be reading from. Phil envisioned a “homeopape”—an electronic newspaper that could telepathically know what type of news you want to read.

Before he died (in 1982) Phil told my friend Paul Williams that he realized he had been telling the same story over and over in many different ways through his novels, short stories, and opinion essays. Phil also kept a mammoth file of private writing that he called his Exegesis.⁷ I mention PKD, yet again << as I have in all my books >> because I found “a kindred spirit”, another “grappler” in Phil and his quest for what’s really real.

What really resonated with me was PKD's obsession to find meaning, purpose, “enlightenment” and liberation through writing. While writing may not be your thing, some of these topics may resonate with you or your YuanFen 😊 Or, perhaps you’re simply seeking some tips on how to feel healthier and happier. That’s how it started for me. I found Chinese medicine years ago when I was allergic to nearly all American pharmaceutical and many over-the-counter meds.

Allergies are interesting teachers. Anyone and anything can be our teacher... even a spider, as I’ll share in the Cosmic Convos section (aka cosmic conversations and lessons.)

That’s why we’re grappling. There is another way to live. It’s possible to cultivate our minds and heal ourselves. It’s called Conscious Living. It begins with...

Grappling as a practice

I’ve been grappling with the concept of “beneficial practice” for a long time. Many years ago a Catholic nun who I met socially, rather than “in church”, was curious about how I became a Buddhist. I explained that I rarely call myself that. I always considered myself a seeker and dharma student of Eastern philosophy and teachings, especially dealing with consciousness. She asked about my daily practice. That was 25 years ago and her question really focused my mind. What was my real practice and what did I incorporate into daily living?

I felt embarrassed that I couldn’t describe a practice and wasn’t even meditating daily. I mostly read and sometimes went to a talk or meditation center, but not routinely.

Being a compassionate nun, Sister Vincentia gently suggested I might become more aware of my daily habits, maybe write about my feelings and experiences in a journal. She also suggested I try listening to some audio books by Buddhist nun Pema Chodron. I replied that I had a couple of books by Pema but confessed I hadn’t really read them, just skimmed through. That night I began reading *Start Where You Are* which opens with this:

“WE ALREADY HAVE EVERYTHING WE NEED.” Yes, just like that in all caps.

⁷ PKD / Philip K Dick’s million-word Exegesis... basically a journaling process that has since been published.

Pema continues, “There is no need for self-improvement.” And goes on to caution against the “heavy trips” we place on ourselves. We can still hear remnants of Pema’s hippie life in Taos, New Mexico, in her first book written after she became a Buddhist nun. She expands on self-acceptance practices (maitri) and tonglen, a Tibetan practice (གཏོང་ལེན་) of “sending and receiving” compassion and kindness, in other books. Here’s a Youtube video of Pema many years later (2009) giving [an overview of tonglen](#). Her trademark is the ability to convey acceptance and humor. A non-Buddhist friend of mine once claimed to be “partial to Pema” over any other audio dharma teachings I had shared for that reason.

My struggle continues to be consistent practice. I have settled into certain morning rituals that still involve writing contemplation (where this book came from— my grappling) and a few other morning and evening practices I’ll share along the way. Let’s remember though, Pema Chodron (my numero uno footnote) says that grappling *is* our Practice. To be accurate, Pema actually said, “grappling with the dharma (the teachings) is our Practice.”



seeking the Elan Vital

If you haven’t heard this term before it’s one I really love. Elan Vital basically means “what moves or inspires us.” The term was coined by French philosopher Henri Bergson in the very early 1900s and has come to convey our life force, or for some the “fountain of youth.” Originally Bergson’s idea was far more complex⁸ But it’s essentially what inspires us.

Here Dean Radin (of Noetic Sciences) and others provide a more sweeping view in this brief ten minute, very worthwhile video overview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qv-nY4QNZUk>

In other words, the Elan Vital is the “spark of joy” that Pema and the KonMari⁹ crowd are seeking. Zen, a concept that I’ve been enamored with, even identified with, for most of my life, is also based on the idea that by calming our busy mind, we access the subtle realms within. We can think of these as mind dimensions, or even “realms”, as we’ll consider later in Dream Yoga and Bardo & Beyond.

Elan vital can replace words like spirituality, God or even Dharma. Many words have become too controversial to discuss or even ponder. *Psychology Today* tackled that idea in this 2011 article: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/spiritual-wisdom-secular-times/201103/what-is-spirituality>

If some of these ideas are that difficult to ponder, why try? That’s part of the premise here—we often find ourselves grappling, struggling, with complicated and contradictory thoughts and emotions. Speaking of,

⁸ Bergson, according to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, thought of his Elan Vital theory as “to unify in a consistent way two contradictory features: heterogeneity and continuity.” But my use of the term comes from later thinkers and is kind of “cool” in that his own theory has evolved in a creative way, which is what he originally conceived of.

⁹ The **KonMari Method**™ involves specific ways of “tidying up” and creating more joy in your life, according to creator Marie Kondro. She encourages people to “Keep only those things that speak to the heart, and discard items that no longer spark joy.” KonMari was a culture phenomena in the US before and during COVID.

I must credit Ira Progoff¹⁰ and his “Method” of intensive journaling for reminding me of the term Elan Vital. His method can be considered “intense grappling” as a psychotherapeutic technique. I have more to share on that process in the Cosmic section.

dancing with the Tao

The idea of dancing energy creating health and harmony is definitely part of my Elan Vital 😊

Whether those molecules are dancing around within us or around us or both is truly what creates our Quantum/Cosmic Continuum, the never-ending spectrum we call infinity.

Energy is at the core of everything. Energy transforms us and we can truly transform ourselves through movement. The concept recurs in many ancient texts and “religions.” It seems those shamanistic (indigenous) ancient dancing rituals had a purpose. Dancing and moving increases our energy, some say opens our energy channels.

Here’s a point for pondering, grist for grappling... Do we have an energy body?

Since we ARE energy, everything is energy (as we previously considered) we could say our physical body is an energy body. Some might prefer to think of an energy field, as I used to envision, the source of auras and our “vibes” (vibrational energy.)

Remember this Scientific American [article](#) from my Riddles open on energy, frequencies and light creating everything?

While it’s increasing clear that the energy practices we’re about to consider affect us, exactly how? Chinese medicine, like acupuncture, refers to clearing “energy blocks” in “channels.” A Buddhist practice called Vajra Dance¹¹, akin to T’ai Chi, claims to “activate and coordinate specific energy points in our body according to an ancient knowledge of channels and chakras. In this way the Vajra Dance dissolves energy blocks, harmonizes the three main aspects of our being – body, energy and mind.”

Where are our chakras and channels? Modern medicine can’t find them. Are they inside or outside of our physical body? Consciousness has no solidity, defies location and yet it’s the real deal, even if some scientists or academics still call it the “hard problem.”



¹⁰ Ira Progoff 1921 - 1998 is best known for his work in holistic depth psychology that he learned directly from CG Jung when studied privately with Jung in Switzerland. He combined those ideas with specific types of journaling thereby creating what is called the Intensive Journal Method. I include an audio link with Ira’s voice in the Cosmic Section and explain much more about his Method, especially a process he called “dialoguing.”

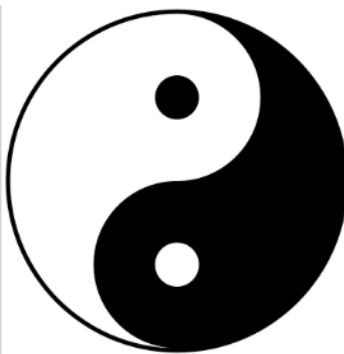
¹¹ Vajra Dance is a unique type of movement created by Namkhai Norbu, an internationally respected Dzogchen Master, both an ancient and advanced form of Tibetan Buddhist practice called the “Great Perfection.”

An entire section on consciousness is coming, after Energy Practices.
Throughout these next sections on mind and energy we'll grapple with the how and why and more.

Energy Practices

If you want to find the secrets of the universe, think in terms of energy, frequency and vibration.
- Nikola Tesla (1856 – 1943)

The following sections describe unique types of energy practices. “Kung Fu” is more of a philosophy.
T'ai Chi is the basis of Chinese movement that was done intentionally to enhance one's vitality.



Taijitu (太极图) / **Taiji** is the famous symbol, shown first in an 18th Century version associated with the original Taoist “Daoyin”, followed by the “yin/yang” version we often see today.

The concept of balancing yin (considered female or intuitive energy) with stronger “male” yang energy is a core concept of

Chinese healing and energy practices which blend together into the universal Tao or totality. All That Is. In a true non-binary 21st Century view, we can consider balancing strength and flexibility—actually all opposing forces— to create whole or holistic health.

Yogic powers, or “super powers”, were discovered centuries ago when invading Mongolian warriors discovered monks practicing slow deliberate movements. When the forest dwellers realized that were under attack they are said to have flown up into the air “Matrix style” and with a series of lightning-fast chopping and kicking movements knocked weapons from the invader's hands and rapidly reduced the giants to whimpering ground crawlers. Wow, how?

That, grasshopper, is how so-called martial arts came to be.

Ha, that's my pith summary inspired by Zhuangzi's tales he called “the Riddles of Qi.”

In fact, some say it was Mongolian leader Kublai Khan, founder of the Yuan Dynasty (and grandson of Genghis), who was one of the warriors who encountered monks on the peaceful Tibetan plateau that some called Shangri-la. Kublai Khan was astounded to see “flying carpets”, men who could vanish and re-appear and other “magical” powers.

Blessing or curse? A question will grapple with over and over...

Daoyin is the original ancient Chinese body-mind practice for both physical and mental purification. Ascetics of ancient times believed it could be used to obtain "eternal youth" (*changsheng bulao*).

The first historical reference about Daoyin appears in the Taoist Zhuangzi text.

Breathing in and out, exhaling and inhaling, they get rid of the old to absorb the new. They swing like bears and stretch like birds - all this they do in order to have long life. They are Daoyin disciples, people who nourish their form seeking for longevity like Pengzu.
-- Zhuangzi

Curious about the Zhuangzi, even older than the Tao te Ching? Here is one version and commentary:

<https://www.iep.utm.edu/zhuangzi/#H2>

Daoyin is certainly one inspiration, if not the basis, for our 20th Century energy practices. But what about...



Kung Fu

First of all, why should I spend so much time and energy trying to convey these ancient concepts, life lessons and various “techniques”? I could simply enjoy my own beneficial practice and cultivate my own vitality rather than deplete it working on this book. Ah, Grasshopper, this is the original Buddhist conundrum. Once Awakened Buddha could not enjoy nirvana in paradise while others were still suffering. Speaking of “Grasshopper” (I’m about to explain, in case that reference is meaningless to you.)

What do you really know about “Kung Fu”? Maybe you’ve watched Kung Fu movies or the 1970s TV series actually called “Kung Fu” starring David Carradine. Maybe you first saw Bruce Lee or even earlier Jackie Chan with his unique form of “Chinese opera and acrobatics” later called “gong fu.”

Future readers may experience an entirely new AR/VR reality where they can take on Lee or Chan, or even fly around like Matrix movies. In both the “Kung Fu” TV series and the animated Kung Fu Panda movie the Master, called a Shifu, referred to his young student as Grasshopper, a term of affection.

Kung Fu and QiGong (chee gong) have become popular terms for energy-based movements. In America we associate peaceful T’ai Chi and yoga movements with yin energy and differentiate between martial arts and energy/health movements, but that is not the true history of the Practice.

The origin of modern T’ai Chi and so-called “kung fu” moves come from chuan fa, same as Zhuan Fa, which means perfect practice. The Zhuangzi text, along with the *Tao Te Ching*, are foundational texts of the Tao which is a peaceful philosophy, not martial arts.

I'm about to burst your bubble if you're a big Kung Fu fan, and trust me I loved Carradine and Po Panda (still do.) The once foreign concepts have become American pop culture. BUT there are no ancient Chinese or Asian symbols— therefore nothing in history— representing or recording Kung Fu.

America's first taste of "kung fu style", as the phrase was used, in a 1950 movie featuring Bruce Lee as "The Kid." In real life Lee's father taught a type of movement he called Jun Fan Gung Fu. There are stories of how T'ai Chi postures and movements developed into a type of "martial arts" in the semi-mythical Xia Dynasty (夏朝), however keep digging. There are no contemporaneous records of the Xia, nor is such a dynasty referenced in the oldest Chinese texts and nothing about "kung fu."

In Taoist tales, around A.D. 220-65. Hwa Tuo is said to have created a set of exercises based upon five animals: the tiger, bear, monkey, stork and deer. A few centuries later an Indian Monk, well known to Buddhists, Bodhidharma, allegedly spent time at a monastery in the Chinese Kingdom of Wei before eventually arriving at the Shaolin temple. Shaolin Temple, frequently depicted in the TV series "Kung Fu" (and apparently in many other movies and stories) is described here: <https://www.laugar-kungfu.com/style-origin>

Bruce Lee refers to "Northern Shaolin" style (the Temple mentioned above) as a form of "martial art." However, Shaolin Temple is a Chan ("Zen") Buddhist temple and martial arts are not part of Buddhist practices. We're back to what I said earlier about Mongolian warriors invading and perverting practices in an effort to attain yogic powers (more in a moment, and a further look at real powers, real soon.)

As I was finishing writing this section, Bruce Lee's daughter, announced her new book on the teachings of her father: [Be Water, My Friend](#) (released October of 2020.) Here's a trailer for a [movie "Be Water"](#) of Lee's philosophy.

There are absolutely awesome energy practices that can result in "super powers", but there is a catch (or two.) First, and most importantly, powers come from practice—LOTS of practice— some say more than one lifetime; thus the concept of reincarnation (rebirth) or returning for unfinished business. It's much more complicated but we'll grapple with that in the Yogic Powers section.

2) The final catch is that bragging about or revealing such powers for gain is a "klesha" (negative behavior) that creates more karma (consequences) and cancels out cultivation of the high vibes that enabled those powers. Truly a "Catch 22."

So yes, I was sad to know that my beloved tag #grappling is being used in a violent way as part of self-defense and MMA. I was slightly relieved when I first read this: "We explicitly name it for students as "grappling;" and discuss why grappling is an important part of our learning community. We praise students for putting in their best effort and making mistakes, and we intentionally and explicitly establish making mistakes as an integral part of the learning process."

Nice. That still sounded like the way I think of grappling with concepts and dharma teachings, until I read: "In hand-to-hand combat, grappling is a close fighting technique used to gain a physical advantage or cause injury to the opponent."

Sigh. Let's move on to the origin of so-called "martial arts", the mother of all movements...

Tai Chi

“Peaceful Energy” 太極

T'ai means peace and chi means our vital force or energy. So the term speaks for itself— peace not aggression or fighting. The essence of T'ai Chi is soft, slow movements, a moving meditation. As I mentioned earlier it was warriors who wanted the benefits and power without understanding the nature of the practice.

Water wears down rocks. Supple bamboo bends while brittle branches of larger trees break. This is the underlying concept of t'ai chi movements. We become softer, not harder or tense, with the subtle movements. Our inner energy is enhanced.

太極拳 = Tai Chi Chuan

What we currently think of as t'ai chi was a secret practice for centuries.

Sophia Delza, a professional dancer, performed the first known public demonstration of t'ai chi in the United States at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City in 1954. She also wrote the first English language book on t'ai-chi, "*T'ai-chi ch'üan: Body and Mind in Harmony*" (1961.) Ms. Delza taught regular classes at Carnegie Hall, the Actors Studio, and the United Nations.

That original form from China consisted of 108 movements. While beautiful, it was very difficult to learn and perform for American students. One of the lineage teachers, Zheng Manqing, shortened the practice to 37 movements and this became a popular US form of T'ai Chi Chuan known as Zheng's form.

Over the years many forms and t'ai chi practices have evolved, including an even shorter form called T'ai Chi Chih created by a former New Yorker turned Albuquerque resident in his later years. Justin Stone¹² traveled the world learning various Chinese, East Indian and other Asian practices, including Zen meditation. He combined his experiences and wisdom into a special form of t'ai chi that I was fortunate to learn directly from him 2000 – 2008. Justin stopped giving lessons around that time in his 90s and died a few years later. He attributed his long healthy life to T'ai Chi and his many other practices.

T'ai Chi Chih, known as Joy through Movement, consists of 19 movements and one final pose. You can learn as much as you'd like about T'ai Chi Chih or just [watch a demo on the TCC website](#).

There are many t'ai chi videos on Youtube (including Justin's) for free. Justin also wrote over ten books, some chronicle his *Spiritual Odyssey*, a book on Eastern Philosophy and one dedicated to various types of meditation.

¹² Justin F. Stone (1916 – 2012) is called the Originator of T'ai Chi Chih, a short form of t'ai chi movements. He lived a long amazing life that is well documented on the [T'ai Chi Chih website](#). Generically it's t'ai chi, same with qigong, specific forms should be titled. (Sorry I'm not consistent yet in this FFE, that's the writer, not the editor.)

<<<<< end of sample >>>>>

#grappling

An eBook formatted for Kindle readers or any device running the Kindle app.

FFE (Friends & Family Edition) Release: **12.21.2020** Public Release: 2.21.21

NO, it's not a book on MMA (mixed martial arts.)

It's a book of hope on how to cope with the truly weird year that was 2020...
And whatever comes next.

SPOILER: it could get worse if we don't grapple with change.

Like shifting sand, our world was rapidly changing in 2020. I was writing about the benefits of healing energy practices and other natural ways of living (and dreaming.) And then came #COVID-19.

My original goal was to offer antidotes and alternatives to our hectic American life. Remember "before times?" Things were truly spiraling out of control before COVID. Going "back" is not an option. To forge a new path forward requires serious grappling.

As upsetting and unsettling as 2020 seemed, those microscopic messengers certainly got our attention. They are either screaming or whispering in your inner most ear, just what you need to HEAR:

"this is karma." WAKE UP! 

#grappling is divided into three sections:

Riddles of Qi, Cosmic Convos & Mundane Matters.

May it be of benefit.